

From this one can see something of how the Greeks considered women. The same writer says again of the result of this low esteem in which the Greeks held their women, "The low position generally assigned the wife in the home had a most disastrous effect upon Greek morals. She could exert no such elevating or refining influence as she casts over the modern home. The men were led to seek social and intellectual sympathy among a class of talented and often highly cultured women known as Hetairae. * * * Yet the influence of this class was most harmful to social morality, so that to the degradation of women in the home may be traced the source of the most serious stain that rests upon Greek civilization."

Speaking of education among the Greeks the same author says: "It was only the boys who received education." From these quotations, the words of Conybeare & Howson in their "Life and Epistles of the Apostle Paul" are made plain and credible when they say in reference to this very chapter in speaking of the abuses in the church at Corinth, "Women had forgotten the modesty of their sex and came forth unveiled (contrary to the habit of their country) to address the public assembly." (b) Women were not allowed, except women of loose morals, to walk on the streets or appear in public assemblies without their veils, which were coverings for the head including the face, to show their subjection to their husbands.

2. What purpose did Paul have in writing this letter to the Corinthians? Very evidently from the abuses he condemns and the instructions given it was to correct these abuses and get the church started along the line of Christian usefulness and peace. These Greeks had been all their lives heathens. The Gospel which Paul brought them, on the one hand did not in a moment set down rules for the whole life, but laid down principles, and on the other could not change at once the environment in which there was some good and some evil which must be thought out on the line of the principles of the Gospel. One man had been so governed by loose ideas of marriage relations that he saw no particular harm in marrying his step-mother. (Ch. 5.) Some were so in love with disputing for the mere love of dispute that they did not see it was wrong for Christians to do in this as they had before. Some went to law before heathen magistrates as they did before they were converted. (Ch. 6.) Paul writes this letter to apply the principles of the gospel to see these questions. So here in this case, the women hearing a gospel preached in which it was said there was "neither male nor female," is it any wonder that they began to argue that that meant liberty to throw off the customary signs of subjection? To correct these abuses Paul wrote this letter. Almost every chapter has a special subject for correction. In one it is rivalries for various leaders; in another the relation of the sexes and divorce; in another fornication; in another eating of

meat sacrificed to idols; in another law suits among the Christians before the heathen judges; in another the special gifts of the spirit; and here the covering of women in meeting in sign of their subjection to their husbands and the Lord's Supper.

Now the third question. Does this chapter have a general bearing in its commands, or was it for a special time and special need which no longer exists?

Let us try some of the other commands of this letter and perhaps by them we shall better be able to settle this question. As to fornication, disputing, and going to law it is quite generally agreed that they apply in certain aspects today as then, *because the conditions remain the same.*

But let us take chapter seven, verses 25-40 concerning the proper position for fathers to take in regard to the marriage of their daughters. If Paul means anything, he means to say that it is better for a father *not* to allow his daughter to marry than to allow her to marry. Is that of *general* application, or *special*? Evidently, for a certain time and certain conditions. Of course some shallow disputers who would rather get out of a difficulty than to face a truth which does not fit their theory, will reply that Paul says that in this he had received no commandment from the Lord. True, but he does say that he gives it as his judgment, as of one who has obtained mercy to be faithful. And it is his best judgment that the virgins should not marry. Why? "Because of the present distress." What distress? The terribleness of the times in which he lived, of the coming of Nero's persecutions of the Christians. But who today applies that literally and generally? Not even the Roman Catholics. Or, take the case of eating meat which has been offered to idols. Is that of general application? If so, it is wrong for you and me here in Christian America so to do. If some one should discover that he could ship meat from India which had been offered to idols and sell it cheaper in our markets than our domestic meat, would it be wrong to eat it if we knew it? No. Would it be if we lived in India? Yes. Why the difference? Because, here an idol is generally recognized as nothing. But in heathen lands an idol means something to those who have worshipped it all their lives, and their consciences being weak we would do them the wrong to make them think we thought an idol was something besides wood or stone, if we should partake of meat offered unto it. We should not eat meat offered to idols if we lived in heathen countries for the sake of him who might see us do it and thus be made to stumble at our example.

Again, take the injunction of the apostle in chapter 14: 34, 35, in regard to women speaking in church. Is that of universal application to all times and places? I know of no one who so contends. The Greeks thought that if a woman addressed a meeting that she was throwing off her subjection

to her husband and leaving the place in which her ignorance had placed her. Hence, Paul says they shall be silent and not undertake to teach the men. He says the same to Timothy located at the Greek city of Ephesus. But when conditions shall have changed, is the command in force? The gospel has changed woman's position among men. And every church has shown common sense in allowing women to teach Sunday-school classes, lead prayer meetings, and preach in these days when woman has been liberated by the gospel.

Likewise, in the matter of the Greek women keeping their heads and faces covered in public places, when to uncover them would have indicated to those who saw them, (1) rejection of lawful subjection to her husband, or (2) if not married, discarding of the sign of virtue and chastity. (For only the harlots went with heads and faces uncovered, or heads shorn.)

CONCLUSION

1. What has been said so far shows that this chapter was written to correct an abuse in the church at Corinth, which was needing correction because of woman's position in the Greek world of that day.

2. The conditions of those times are not the conditions of today in regard to the custom of covering the head and face of virtuous and chaste women in public, hence, the commands of the chapter do not apply to us any more than the commands of Chap. 7: 26, 27. etc.

3. It cannot be objected that all the commands of the New Testament are to be obeyed today, because they were all given for a purpose to meet a certain condition and need. They all are for our instruction, but we must and do decide whether they are for our conditions or not.

4. Hence, since covering the head or not covering by the sisters in meeting does not signify chastity and subjection or the lack of it, the necessity of its observance by them has ceased, even as the other commands I have cited are no longer operative, because no longer needed by the conditions by which we are surrounded.

5. As to its being a universal custom, there need be no doubt, for Paul says plainly, "But if any man seem to be contentious, *we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.*" What custom? Covering the head in prayer by the sisters, about which he has just been writing.

6. Paul wrote this injunction to none but Greek churches, as also that concerning the silence of women in church. It was the custom for Jewish women to be unveiled in the synagogue and the men to keep their hats on.

OBJECTIONS

From these thoughts one can easily see the reason of the Apostle's injunction in this case. But some may say, "Why will not that line of argument also demolish feet washing as a church ordinance?" Simply